

IN FOCUS

Edited by Barry Jones

Where Eagles dare — and find success

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California dreamin' ... The Eagles

THE Eagles swoop high and mighty over the rock scene these days, and by the evidence of their all-too-brief British tour last week, they're now soaring even higher in the estimation of their many fans.

Any doubts about whether their sweet-sounding California dreaming songs might turn out to be monotonous and dirge-like when performed live were swiftly dispelled by their gig in Stafford.

The difference between the country-rock outfit I saw as special guests to Neil Young at Liverpool in 1973, and The Eagles as they are today, lies in their Extra Added Ingredients.

The blend has been enriched by the addition of guitarist Don Felder, a late arrival for the On The Border LP, who stamped his mark on One Of These Nights.

But it is the newest member, Joe Walsh, who has really transformed the group into a world-beating act.

His credentials are enviable — a period with the James Gang followed by a series of solo albums, a man rated as one of the best guitarists in the world by Eric Clapton and Pete Townshend.

And if you thought The Eagles were a cool and laid-back bunch of characters, you ought to see them thundering through Walsh's songs like Rocky Mountain Way and Turn To Stone.

It was really a case of hats off to The Eagles.

After all, a group which only performs three songs from their latest album must have a lot of good songs in store — The Eagles practically have a warehouse.

In truth, they're possibly the most consistent pop-rock writers since The Beatles, and seem close to taking on the mantle as being the dream weavers of a generation.

There wasn't a bad number in the whole set. No lull in the proceedings, just a series of highlights.

I picked out three particular moments. The first was Doolin-Dalton, the opening track from Desperado, which struck home early in the set. Then it was Walsh's thumping rendition of Turn To Stone, ending in a slide-guitar crescendo, all perfectly controlled.

Then it was Randy Meisner's Take It To The Limit from One Of These Nights, which showed off another of their assets, those harmonies, to the full.

In whichever department you look, The Eagles are either competent, good or brilliant. There were some piercing twin lead guitar solos from Felder and Walsh, and when Glenn Frey joined in too, this band was really rocking.

Only in one song — Best of My Love — were acoustic guitars to the fore.

My only complaints were that Don Henley's drumming was a little

pedestrian at times — he handles most of the vocals, and perhaps there's a case for a second percussionist for live work — and that they didn't do all the songs I wanted them to.

It's also a pity that fans have to travel so far these days to see top bands. Is it really that impossible to organise more than three venues for the whole of the British Isles?

Nevertheless, The Eagles were an outstanding success, and if you haven't heard much of Joe Walsh, then take a listen to his solo albums, notably So What.

OK, I know The Eagles' songs are perhaps doomed to get played in hotel lifts, but there again, so is the music of Pink Floyd. — BJ.